



# The EU 'Healthier Together' Non-Communicable Diseases Initiative

Reducing the burden of non-communicable diseases

## EUROPEAN CHRONIC DISEASE ALLIANCE

### BACKGROUND

*Provide the rationale and background for your proposed action including challenges and enablers.*

'Healthier Together' highlights that "**prevention of NCDs remains one of the most underinvested areas across Europe**". Only 2.8% of total health expenditure in the EU is allocated to prevention, while health promotion and disease prevention can reduce the prevalence of NCDs by 70%. COVID-19 underscored the necessity to mobilise adequate funding for NCD prevention. The costs of inaction are far greater than the investment required as the cost of NCDs will steeply increase.

The benefits and cost-effectiveness of EU strategies on prevention are widely acknowledged. These require political leadership and collaboration across sectors and government levels.

**Increasing investment in NCDs prevention is integral to the political declaration of the 2018 UN HLM on NCDs, which recommends exploring innovative financing mechanisms.**

The EU region gathers prominent health economists, public health experts, scientists and specialist clinicians, who can guide further efforts.

This action shall **drive EU collaboration on financing for NCDs prevention**. It shall stimulate investment and thereby **support member states achieve their 2018 commitments and report progress at the 2025 HLM on NCDs**.

*While this action focuses on prevention, the high burden associated with NCDs and co-morbidities also requires investment in management, particularly early detection (including combined screening) and integrated care.*

### CONCRETE ACTION

- **Idea:**
  - *What are the objectives and the scope of the action?*

The action will cover the full spectrum of NCDs and aim to:

- **Explore sources and develop innovative financing models for prevention**, adaptable to different national situations, employing effective economic tools including price policies
- **Stimulate multi-sectoral dialogue and cooperation**
- **Support action and progress in the EU towards the 2025 UN HLM on NCDs**, building on WHO-World Bank efforts

*How will this action support the prevention of non-communicable diseases in the EU?*

- EU added value and impact:
  - *What is the EU added value and impact of the action?*

Added-value:

- **NCDs do not have borders.** All EU countries experience the challenge they pose for societies and economies. All face **economic constraints amidst a rising prevalence of NCDs**; and while more investment in health systems is needed, including primary and secondary prevention.
- To be effective, rethinking financing models for prevention requires the **input of experts from across the EU with various experiences and backgrounds.** EU collaboration will allow to **exchange and apply best practices from different member states** in the formulation of scenarios and models, while considering country specificities.

Impact:

- **Leadership and higher investment in NCDs prevention across EU countries** in the future, **with a positive impact on economies and health systems**, due to approaches allowing a high-return on investment
- **A healthier population and reduced prevalence of NCDs in the next decade including for the younger population** who is increasingly affected by the commercial determinants of health; increased productivity and better quality of life
- **Tangible progress in meeting the UN SDGs and global commitments on NCDs** made by member states and the EU
- **A strengthened, concerted response in the EU to shared NCD risk factors**, leveraging the updated WHO evidence-based recommendations that provide opportunities for high-return on investment

## CHALLENGES AND ENABLERS

- *Which issues will your action address on health promotion and prevention of non-communicable diseases in particular related to health determinants, or socio-economic, environmental, commercial determinants of health?*

- NCDs are a **leading cause of premature mortality** in the EU and disproportionately **affect the more disadvantaged population groups.**
- There is plenty of evidence (e.g latest Lancet Series on NCD Economics) demonstrating the **links between poverty and risk factors** of NCDs, such as air pollution, toxic substances, unhealthy diet, tobacco use.
- Evidence also shows how the use of **price and fiscal policies** to address these risk factors is economically relevant and health-promoting.
- Financing models developed under this action shall play a key role in preventing NCDs and **tackling main determinants of different nature** (socio-economic, environmental, and commercial determinants); and address underlying health inequalities.
- They will yield **particular benefits for younger generations**, as there is growing evidence on the prevalence of common NCD risk factors and obesity in children and adolescents, while the benefits of prevention

*How will it target specific challenges, and are there any enablers that can take your action forward?*

measures at an early life phase, notably in childhood, are well demonstrated.

## IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

- *Provide your views on how your organisation can be involved and help in taking this idea forward.*

ECDA is a coalition of 12 European health organisations sharing the same interests in combating preventable chronic diseases, these organisations gather national counterparts in all EU member states and/or the WHO European region. ECDA represents millions of chronic disease patients and over 200 000 health professionals.

ECDA can provide **expertise in the shaping and execution of this action**, by leveraging its members' networks and external organisations with whom the Alliance works, including health economists. ECDA can help provide concerted, **combined input from this community to feed into preparations and activities, including evidence, best practice and recommendations**. ECDA supported the EU Reflection Process on chronic diseases of 2011 and since then the various initiatives, projects and policies related to NCDs prevention. ECDA and several individual members were **partners of the EU-funded EConDA project** (Economics of Chronic Diseases) and **supported in a collaborating role the EU Joint Actions on Chronic Diseases** (CHRODIS, CHRODIS+). ECDA can build on the knowledge, experiences and outputs of these initiatives to support this action, in collaboration with relevant partners.

*What can  
your  
organisation  
do to put  
this idea in  
place?*